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Inside Information

United States Department
of Agriculture

Office of Information

Washington, D.C. 20250

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 30

October 21, 1985

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PAC GETS USDA 'STREAMLINING' BRIEFING

USDA agency information heads and Office of Information division chiefs who attended the biweekly Public Affairs Council meeting October 5 received two important briefings: One on the progress of the 1985 Farm Bill and the other on the USDA Streamlining Task Force's upcoming report.

Fran Boyd, Deputy Director of the USDA Office of Congressional Relations, summarized the Farm Bill as developed in the U.S. House of Representatives and the upcoming action by the U.S. Senate. He explained USDA's position on some of the major points of the Senate bill.

Boyd also reported that four important USDA position papers would be available shortly which would explain some key issues of the Farm Bill.

Charles Grizzle, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration, gave a run-down on the development of the proposed options for streamlining (reorganizing or restructuring) USDA and its programs. A Departmental task force was formed by Secretary John R. Block last May which was charged with developing by this October some options for streamlining the Department.

The three major areas included in the upcoming report are: Support services such as administrative and personnel services, field organization, and headquarters organization.

Grizzle indicated that some of the options will include consolidations of some agencies into related functional agencies. But other options include various partial restructurings, as well as the "status quo."

He said no action on streamlining would be recommended until after the 1985 Farm Bill is passed by the Congress.

VIDEOTAPES WANTED AT NDSU

North Dakota State University would like to locate any existing videotapes on soil conservation tillage and fertility management. They would also like to receive videotape catalogs.

The contact at NDSU is Jim Kenward, Radio/TV Specialist, Box 5655, Fargo, ND 58105. His Dialcom mailbox is AGS1801.

USDA'S CONSERVATION RESERVE INFORMATION SUPPORT PLAN

USDA's Resource Conservation Information Team (RCIT), recently formed to take care of interagency resource conservation information projects, has an important assignment.

With the Senate and the House in favor of a conservation reserve program and with the Administration also backing such an initiative, everyone is expecting to see conservation reserve in the 1985 farm bill. The RCIT goal is to plan and carry out USDA's information/education effort in support of the conservation reserve program.

The Team, chaired by the Office of Information's Bill Whyte, is made up of the information directors of SCS, FS, ASCS and ES; members of their staffs; and program people involved in planning for the impending conservation reserve program.

The USDA Information/Education plan was drawn up by the Team and submitted to Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Peter Myers for his review and comment on October 15.

FMHA CONTRACTS FOR OFFICE AUTOMATION

FmHA's era of multifunction workstations (MFWS) came closer last week when a 10-year contract was awarded to Electronic Data Systems (EDS).

The contract covers MFWS hardware, software and maintenance for all offices of FmHA as well as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), including National headquarters for both, SCS's 3,300 local offices, FmHA's 2,300 field offices and the FmHA office in St. Louis, Mo.

This modernization program includes the automated field management system (AFMS) software that uses word processing, database management systems, spreadsheets and communications between these functions to assist the offices in performing their mission.

EDS will serve as the prime contractor, with AT&T providing about 80 percent of the MFWS equipment, and provide training to State installation and training teams and National Office and Finance Office personnel.

AGRICULTURAL WEATHER PROJECT

The Agricultural Weather Information System Evaluation Project (AgWISE) has been recently authorized by Assistant Secretary Orville G. Bentley and funded through the Cooperative Extension Service. It is housed at Michigan State University.

The project, directed by Jon Bartholic and coordinated by Joel Lichty, will attempt to describe and evaluate systems as they exist in each State involved with the coordination of weather data collection, weather related research efforts, information dissemination through extension, and application at farm level. Taking the best aspects of different systems, a model for improved information flow will be developed, with the ultimate goal of improving profitability.

As part of the first phase of this project, letters have been sent to all Agricultural Experiment Station Directors and Cooperative Extension Service Directors, asking them to identify key people in their States who can provide a comprehensive picture of their state agricultural weather information system. The cooperation and prompt response of directors to this request will be appreciated.

'FEDNEWS' AVAILABLE TO DIALCOM USERS

ITT Dialcom Incorporated has made available "FEDNEWS," the Federal Government Information Service, to all Dialcom users, including Federal and State governments and institutions.

FEDNEWS provides 11 information data bases, including "USDA Online" and "White House News." Users can select particular information data bases from the FEDNEWS main menu by entering the option at the "Enter a service code:" prompt.

Users can "scan" each FEDNEWS service for stories or articles to then "read," or they can keyword "search" the data bases for news stories or reports.

Here's what the FEDNEWS menu looks like:

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SERVICE

CODE:

FOR:

WHNEWS WHITE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

USANEWS U.S. ARMY

USRNEWS U.S. ARMY RESERVE

USDA U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

CENSUS BUREAU OF CENSUS (Dept. of Commerce)

FDA FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (Dept. of Health & Human Services)

FEMA FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FCC FEDERAL COMMUNICATION COMMISSION

HUD U.S. DEPT. OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

INTERIOR U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR

NASA NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

Enter a service code:

FEDNEWS is the result of encouragement by several Federal departments' and agencies' public affairs offices, spearheaded by the National Association of Government Communicators' special interest group on electronic information dissemination and publishing.

USDA, FDA and the White House each had developed their separate data bases on the ITT Dialcom system over the past four years. When some other departments and independent agencies began exploring similar computerized information services, NAGC, an ad hoc group of Federal public affairs officials and ITT Dialcom explored the idea of establishing one electronic data base containing all Federal news on the system. The FEDNEWS idea was born.

Testing of the cooperative service began early in 1985 and was made available to commercial clients of ITT Dialcom several weeks ago. Following General Services Agency rules, now ITT Dialcom can offer the service to its government clients as well.

Experienced users of "USDA Online" will find accessing other FEDNEWS services quite easy--the software and prompts are the same as developed for "USDA Online."

FEDNEWS is priced at \$15 per hour--that's a \$15 per hour surcharge above the regular \$7 per hour Dialcom prime time connect charges and \$6 per hour communications charges (\$5 per hour non-prime time and \$4 Telenet non-prime time communications charges, \$6 for Tymnet and Uninet).

CARIBBEAN WORKSHOP

The International Science and Education Council (ISEC) Research Committee in collaboration with the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS), and the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) is planning a workshop on the management of agricultural research in the Caribbean region.

The target audience is middle managers and above in the agricultural research institutions and universities in the Caribbean.

The objective of the workshop is to provide information based on practical experiences of agricultural research managers, familiar with the Caribbean. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for April 1986, and will be held either in Trinidad or the Virgin Islands.

NATIONAL MEDIA CONFERENCE IN NYC

The 7th Annual National Media Conference and Public Relations Forum will be held January 20-22, 1986, in New York City, at the New York Hilton Hotel.

Every year the conference grows broader, bigger and better. This year there will be over 50 key broadcasters and other media professionals participating in 15 fast-moving workshop sessions.

Among the confirmed speakers will be NBC Nightly News Anchor Tom Brokaw, ABC News Correspondent John Stossel ("20/20" and "Good Morning America"), and Meg Whitcomb ("Dear Meg" columnist).

There will be 45 public relations seminars where you can meet and hear leaders in every major area of public relations.

Registration fee before Dec. 20 is \$650, and \$775 after Dec. 20. The fee includes all activities for the full 3 days. Sessions can be attended on a daily basis at daily fees, or session fees.

For further information call Karen Devoti, Conference Registration Coordinator at (212) 819-9310.

For registration call 1-800-634-4020, or write: Larimi Communications Associates, Ltd., Education Division, 246 West 38th Street, New York, NY 10018.

'FIVE KEYS TO SPACE CUSHION DRIVING'

"The Smith System: Five Keys to Space Cushion Driving" is a videotape which provides graphic on-road demonstration of several driving skills and habits. The video uses a filming technique that puts you behind the wheel and through a variety of traffic situations.

According to Gary Silver, acting director of FmHA Personnel Division, "Every employee should see this videotape and begin using the safe driving principles outlines."

Copies of the tape may be borrowed from FmHA's Organization, Management and Training Division by calling Audrey Love at (202) 475-4744.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments or inquiries should be addressed to either Denver Browning or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

